

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SAM-01 DHA-02 ORM-02

SSM-03 INT-05 /118 W

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R 181203Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9181

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 5485

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ASAD REITERATES STANDARD SYRIAN POSITION
ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES AT COLOMBO

1. PRESIDENT ASAD'S AUGUST 17 ADDRESS TO COLOMBO NAC
CONTAINED REITERATION OF STANDARD SYRIAN POSITIONS REGARDING
MIDDLE EAST ISSUES OMITTING, HOWEVER, ANY DIRECT REFERENCE
TO EGYPT AND SINAI II. HIS COMMENTS ON LEBANON WERE BRIEF
AND HINTED AT NO NEW SYRIAN INITIATIVE.

2. LEBANON: ASAD CHARGED THAT FORCES WHICH OPPOSE
ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE CREATED LEBANESE CRISIS TO OBSTRUCT
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PROGRESS TOWARD SOLUTION OF PALESTINE ISSUE, WHICH HE

DESCRIBED AS ESSENCE OF ME DISPUTE. IN VIEW OF SPECIAL SYRO-LEBANESE RELATIONSHIP AND IN RESPONSE TO APPEALS FROM LEBANESE, SYRIA UNDERTOOK EFFORTS TO SETTLE CIVIL WAR. CONSEQUENTLY, ASAD ASSERTED, SECURITY HAS BEEN RESTORED IN MANY AREAS OF LEBANON AND ONE MILLION REFUGEES FROM LEBANON IN SYRIA ARE BEING CARED FOR. HE MADE BLAND APPEAL FOR COOPERATION FROM ALL TO END CRISIS AND FOIL PLOT DIRECTED AGAINST LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS.

3. ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE: ASAD REPEATED CALL FOR JUST PEACE BASED UPON ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. HE CLAIMED ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO LEARN LESSON FROM OCTOBER 1973 WAR WILL LEAD TO NEW EXPLOSION IN REGION. HE DECRIED STAGNATION IN SETTLEMENT PROCESS, AND SUGGESTED PROGRESS COULD OCCUR "ONLY IF ISRAEL AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT IT ADMIT THAT THERE CAN BE NO SOLUTION TO THE STRUGGLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION IS NOT TACKLED IN A WAY WHICH WOULD GUARANTEE THE FIRM NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." HE REMINDED LISTENERS THAT US VETO HAD PREVENTED ADOPTION OF MEASURES BY UNSC TO DEAL WITH PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

4. COMMENT: ASAD APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED TO USE COLOMBO NAC AS VEHICLE FOR FENCE-MENDING AMONG NON-ALIGNED STATES CONCERNED ABOUT SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON RATHER THAN PLATFORM FOR SIGNALLING MODIFICATIONS IN HIS LEBANESE POLICY. HE BROKE NO NEW GROUND ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND HIS REMARKS ABOUT ISRAEL WERE RELATIVELY RESTRAINED.
MURPHY

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